

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

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AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY

INFO OSAF WASHDC PRIORITY

CSAF WASHDC PRIORITY

AFSC ANDREWS AFB MD/CC PRIORITY

TAC LANGLEY AFB VA/CC PRIORITY

AFLC WPAFB OH/CC PRIORITY

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TAGS: MILI, BE, DA, NL, NO

SUBJECT: F-16 GAO REPORT

REFS: (A) OSLO 1684; (B) COPENHAGEN 2013;

(C) HAGUE 1856

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1. YOUR MESSAGES ON EPG REACTION TO PRESS RELEASES ON THE 1 APRIL 1977 GAO REPORT ON THE "STATUS OF THE F-16 AIRCRAFT PROGRAM' ARE APPRECIATED. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PROVIDED TO CLARIFY ISSUES RAISED WITHIN THE PRESS RELEASES:

A. OVERALL, THE GAO REPORT IS REASONABLY ACCURATE AND

FAIRLY STATED. ITS ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, CONTAINS CONJECTURE WHICH, IF TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT, IS BOTH MISLEADING AND INFLAMMATORY.

B. THE US ACKNOWLEDGES, AT THE OUTSET, THE HIGHLY POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF ITS FOUR EPG PARTNERS ON THE F-16 PROGRAM. THEIR PARTICIPATION HAS GREATLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROCESS OF NATO STANDARDIZATION AND HAS ENHANCED THE DIALOGUE NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE COMMON OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES. IN NO INSTANCE, MOREOVER, HAS

EPG PARTICIPATION FORCED PRECIPITOUS PROGRAM ACTIONS THAT WOULD ULTIMATELY HAVE HAD AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON F-16 COST, SCHEDULE AND PERFORMANCE. ANY OTHER COURSE OF ACTION WOULD HAVE BEEN TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF ALL.

C. IN ORDER TO PURSUE THEIR GOAL OF ACQUIRING A SUPERIOR WEAPON SYSTEM AND SUPPORTING EQUIPMENT, THE AIR FORCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, LOGISTICS AND TACTICAL COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT ALL POTENTIAL F-16 PROBLEMS, NO MATTER HOW MINOR. THIS PROCEDURE IS COMMON TO ALL WEAPON SYSTEM ACQUISITION EFFORTS, NOT JUST THE F-16, AND IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE AGGRESSIVE BEFORE-THE-FACT CORRECTIVE ACTION FOR ELEMENTS THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE AFFECT THE SYSTEM'S SURVIVABILITY, OPERABILITY, MAINTAINABILITY AND RELIABILITY.

D. THUS, WHILE THE USAF HAS GIVEN TOP PRIORITY TO A POTENTIAL F-100 ENGINE STALL STAGNATION PROBLEM, THE UNCLASSIFIED

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PRESS HAS UNDULY ACCENTUATED THE ISSUE. EXCEPT FOR ONE (1) INTENTIONALLY INDUCED CASE, THE F-16 HAS NOT EXPERIENCED A STALL STAGNATION PROBLEM. THE F-100 ENGINE HAS, TO DATE, OVER 130,000 TOTAL OPERATING HOURS. THE NUMBER OF TOTAL OPERATING HOURS WILL MORE THAN TRIPLE (TO OVER 400,000) BEFORE THE FLIGHT OF THE FIRST PRODUCTION F-16 AIRCRAFT IN AUGUST 1978. THIS WILL REPRESENT AN ENGINE MATURITY LEVEL HIGHER THAN THAT EVER BEFORE EXPERIENCED BY A SINGLE ENGINE JET FIGHTER.

E. IN ADDITION, THE F-16 IS ALSO INCORPORATING A REDUCED IDLE THRUST FEATURE ON THE F-100 ENGINE WHICH ELIMINATES THE EXCESSIVE TAXI SPEED EXPERIENCED ON THE PROTOTYPE. THIS FEATURE WILL BE INCORPORATED IN ALL PRODUCTION F-16 AIRCRAFT.

F. EPG REPRESENTATIVES ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE MULTI-FUNCTIONAL F-16 TEST AND EVALUATION (T AND E)

PROGRAM. IN THE TESTS WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT THE AIRCRAFT MEETS OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND THAT IT RETAINS ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN NEW OR MODIFIED ENVIRONMENTS, THE F-16 HAS MET OR EXCEEDED ALL TEST MILESTONES AND PARAMETERS, SAVE ONE. FOR THE LATTER, THE DURABILITY TEST, CORRECTIVE ACTION IS UNDERWAY. CURRENTLY, THE FLIGHT TEST IS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE REINFORCE EARLIER THAT TEST DATA WILL PROVE ADEQUATE TO FULLY SUPPORT A SEPTEMBER 1977 PRODUCTION DECISION.

G. THE NEGATIVE TONE OF THE PRESS RELEASES REGARDING THE F-16'S COMBAT VULNERABILITY IS NOT REPEAT NOT SUPPORTED BY FACT. THE F-16'S AREAS OF VULNERABILITY WERE ASSESSED AGAINST RELEVANT SOVIET SURFACE-TO-AIR AND AIR-TO-AIR THREATS. THE RESULTING ANALYSIS SHOWED THE F-16 TO HAVE SURVIVABILITY SUPERIOR IN ALL CATEGORIES  
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OF EVALUATION TO CONTEMPORARY FIGHTER AIRCRAFT. MOREOVER, THE AIR-TO-GROUND ROLE OF THE F-16 WAS CONSIDERED DURING SOURCE SELECTION, AND THE NECESSITY OF PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SURVIVABILITY FEATURES WAS DIRECTED BY THE USAF AND IS BEING PROVIDED FOR BY THE CONTRACTOR.

2. IN SUMMARY, THE F-16 IS A FIRST-CLASS FIGHTER AIRCRAFT. FLIGHT TESTS HAVE CONFIRMED USAF EXPECTATIONS AND THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE EPG AIR FORCES WILL BE EQUIPPED WITH A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE, MULTI-MISSION AIRCRAFT. THE USAF'S EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE F-16 IS PERHAPS BEST REFLECTED IN THE FACT THAT IT INTENDS TO PROCURE 1388 F-16S, NOT 650 AS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE REUTERS AND AP NEWS RELEASES. THE GAO REPORT ADEQUATELY STATED THE AIR FORCE INTENT, BUT THIS FACT WAS OVERLOOKED BY ALL BUT UPI.  
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